

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 5:00 PM

Mayor Horne opened the meeting by announcing that this was an open meeting of the Common Council. Notice of this meeting was given to the public at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting by forwarding the complete agenda to the official City newspaper, the New Richmond News, and to all news media who have requested the same as well as posting. Copies of the complete agenda were available for inspection at the City Clerk's office. Anyone desiring information as to forthcoming meetings should contact the City Clerk's office.

Roll call was taken.

Members Present: Mayor Horne, Alderman Zajkowski, Volkert, Hansen, Kittel, Ard, and Jackson.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Alderman Zajkowski moved to adopt the agenda as presented, seconded by Alderman Hansen and carried.

Employee Benefits

Mike Darrow stated that the discussion was not to be a negotiation. This is an opportunity for questions to be asked. Mayor Horne gave an overview of the current City Council proposal for employee benefits. The council began looking at changes to be fair and equitable to the employees and to the taxpayers. The proposal includes changing from separate sick and vacation hours to paid time off. The change would be in place as of January 1, 2016. The maximum hours able to be accrued for sick would be 500 hours rather than the current amount of 1,600 hours. The annual cap of hours able to be converted to a sick bank would be 40 hours. Any sick hour balance prior to January 1, 2016 would be frozen and will be paid out at 100% at the time of retirement if not used before. Hours accrued after that date would be paid out at 50%. There have been three meeting with staff to discuss this proposal.

Jeremiah Wendt and Beth Thompson gave a presentation regarding the proposal as well. Several members of the staff have chosen make this a career rather than a stepping stone. Many employees have licenses, certifications, or specialized schooling for their jobs. Several work in high hazard environments and are available 24 hours a day. These things are not typical of the private sector. The employees take pride in their jobs and are very generous. The goal of the presentation is to compare New Richmond with other communities in the region and to point out the benefits or detriments of the proposal from the Council. We need to be sure we are competitive so that we can attract and maintain quality employees. The average number of hours that other communities can bank for sick time is 904 and the proposal is significantly below that at 500 hours. Not all of the current employees will retire from the City, so many won't ever get to the maximum of 1,600 hours. Only 33% of the employees who have retired in the past 15 years have been at that maximum.

With the conversion to paid time off, the employees will each lose seven days off. When comparing other municipalities to New Richmond, their average is the same as the current vacation and sick hours for City employees. The proposal from the City Council is not competitive with other communities. Considerable discussion followed.

Mike Darrow stated that the Council will discuss this at the October 12, 2015 meeting.

Communications and Miscellaneous

None

Alderman Ard moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Hansen and carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Tanya Reigel
City Clerk